United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/825
11 February 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council to hold formal meeting on question of Persian Gulf conflict, Wednesday 13 February.

- Secretary-General to visit Canada to address opening session of International Conference on Air Law, and to meet Canadian Prime Minister.

- Commission for Social Development to discuss social consequences of rapid changes in Eastern Europe; 1994 Year of Family; activities relating to youth, aging, disabled.

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The Security Council is scheduled to hold a formal meeting at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 February, to discuss the current conflict in the Persian Gulf. On the day of the meeting, the Council will hold informal consultations expected to begin at 11 a.m.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in an appeal during Council consultations last Friday, called for intensified diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. He also drew the attention of Council members to an appeal by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) of 1 February, stating that millions of civilians had been caught up in violence, without shelter or protection against bombing and occupation. Mr. Perez de Cuellar said the United Nations system should provide whatever humanitarian assistance it could, both to refugees and to displaced persons, and to the civilian population in the area.

In a separate development, Syria has informed the United Nations of its economic distress as a result of the Security Council's sanctions against Iraq. The Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations, Dia-Allah El-Fattal, transmitted, on 31 January in a letter to the Secretary-General, a national study saying that Syria was facing losses totalling over $2 billion stemming from the international community's embargo against Iraq and Kuwait.

(more)

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The Syrian Ambassador requested the Security Council to consider the case as soon as possible in order to alleviate the situation which has affected the country's income in foreign trade, tourism, financial transfers and oil.

In other communications, Romania has informed the Organization of its decision to send a surgical hospital and medical staff to Saudi Arabia on a humanitarian mission.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 8 February, the Romanian Ambassador to the United Nations, Aurel Dragos Munteanu, said his Government would also dispatch a Romanian Army chemical decontamination unit. The decision, he said, was based on the resolutions of the Security Council -- in particular resolution 678, which set the 15 January deadline, and which requests all States to provide appropriate support for the actions undertaken to liberate Kuwait and to restore international peace and security in the area.

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A United Nations official told correspondents today that the Secretary-General will travel to Canada tomorrow, 12 February, to deliver an address to the opening session of the International Conference on Air Law at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar will then travel to Ottawa for a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in the afternoon. The Secretary-General is expected to return to New York tomorrow evening.

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Today in Vienna, the United Nations Commission for Social Development has begun its session at which it will consider the social consequences of the rapid political and economic transformations in Eastern Europe, among other things. The Commission will also discuss the effects of ethnic violence and the changing structure of the traditional family.

The Commission's session this year is being held at a time when the conflict in the Gulf is modifying expectations for peace and disarmament. The so-called "peace dividend" of detente between East and West -- a reallocation of resources from military to civilian uses -- may not be as high as first hoped, the Commission was told in a report on the world social situation.

In reviewing the world social situation, the Commission will also consider the critical situation of African countries suffering from drought, civil strife and adverse international economic conditions.

Among other items on the Commission's agenda are preparations for the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994. The United Nations Office at Vienna has been charged with the responsibility for co-ordinating the international activities for the Year.

The Commission, which meets every two years, acts as an advisory and preparatory body for the Economic and Social Council. It advises the Council on policies to promote social progress and on practical measures for social welfare and community development.

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